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SUBJECT: US HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR SURINAME

REF: 03 STATE 333935

THE FOLLOWING IS POST'S SUBMISSION FOR THE REPORT ON U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY.

BEGIN TEXT.

THE SURINAMESE GOVERNMENT, HEADED BY PRESIDENT RONALD VENETIAAN, IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRATIC, CONSTITUTIONAL RULE IN THE COUNTRY. SURINAME HELD GENERALLY FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN MAY 2000. THE GOVERNMENT GENERALLY RESPECTED THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS; HOWEVER, THERE WERE PROBLEMS IN SOME AREAS. POLICE MISTREATED DETAINEES, SPECIFICALLY AT THE TIME OF ARREST, AND LOCAL DETENTION FACILITIES REMAINED OVERCROWDED. THE JUDICIARY SUFFERED FROM INEFFECTIVENESS AND A HUGE CASE BACKLOG DUE TO THE SHORTAGE OF JUDGES, RESULTING IN LENGTHY PRETRIAL DETENTION. MEDIA SELF-CENSORSHIP CONTINUED. SOCIETAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, MINORITIES, AND TRIBAL PERSONS PERSISTED. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CONTINUED, AND WHILE THE GOVERNMENT TOOK STEPS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN REMAINED A PROBLEM.

U.S. OFFICIALS ROUTINELY HIGHLIGHT PUBLICLY THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS. THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHER OFFICERS OF THE U.S. MISSION ALSO WORK PRIVATELY WITH SURINAMESE OFFICIALS, NGOS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN AND ENCOURAGE SYSTEMIC REFORMS.

BECAUSE MANY OF SURINAME'S LAW ENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONS CONTINUE TO FACE SIGNIFICANT IMPEDIMENTS, THE EMBASSY FOCUSED ITS HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY EFFORTS IN THAT SECTOR. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY ADDRESSED OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN AREAS SUCH AS HIV/AIDS, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND MICRO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

TO FOSTER MORE PROFESSIONAL SECURITY FORCES AND TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW, THE EMBASSY INVITED EXPERTS FROM THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS, CUSTOMS, AND OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO TRAIN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS (POLICE, CUSTOMS OFFICIALS, PROSECUTORS, AND JUDGES) ON ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS, JOINT POLICE INTELLIGENCE, AND UNDERCOVER TECHNIQUES. THE EMBASSY ASSISTED SURINAME IN ESTABLISHING A FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT, WHICH ALSO RECEIVED USG FUNDING REGIONALLY THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING PROGRAM. IN ADDITION, THE EMBASSY SENT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS FOR TRAINING IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD AND TWO JUDGES TO THE U.S. TO MEET WITH COUNTERPARTS AND OBSERVE THE JUDICIAL PROCESS.

THE DEFENSE ATTACHE OFFICE (DAO) CONDUCTED SEVERAL ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR THAT PROMOTED PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE MILITARY AND EFFORTS BY THE SURINAMESE ARMED FORCES TO ACTIVELY ENHANCE THE WELFARE OF SURINAMESE CITIZENS. THE OFFICE SENT FOR TRAINING SEVENTEEN MILITARY OFFICERS AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY AND EDUCATION TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM IN AREAS, SUCH AS LAW AND BORDER PATROL, WHO WERE VETTED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE EMBASSY IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE LEAHY AMENDMENT. MOREOVER, DAO PROVIDED FIRST RESPONDER MEDICAL AND A FOLLOW-UP ADVANCED EMERGENCY TECHNICIAN TRAINING TO MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL IN COUNTRY. DAO DONATED 250,000 USD FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER AND TWO DISASTER WAREHOUSES AND PROVIDED 500,000 USD IN MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO THE MILITARY. IN ADDITION, DAO, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SURINAME ARMED FORCES, CARRIED OUT A MEDICAL READINESS EXERCISE THAT PROVIDED BASIC MEDICAL, NON-SURGICAL CARE TO 6,000 SURINAMERS.

TO PROMOTE THE STUDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SURINAME, THE EMBASSY PLACED A FULBRIGHT SENIOR SPECIALIST AT THE LOCAL UNIVERSITY, ANTON DE KOM, TO TEACH A HUMAN RIGHTS COURSE TO UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS, INCLUDING POLICYMAKERS. ANOTHER FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST PLACED AT THE UNIVERSITY TAUGHT AROUND 20 SEASONED PROFESSORS STUDENT-CENTERED INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES TO FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING RATHER THAN ROTE MEMORIZATION. THE SUCCESS OF THAT PROGRAM LED A LOCAL INSTITUTE TO PRESENT A COURSE FOR TEACHERS-IN-TRAINING TO LEARN THESE NEW TECHNIQUES. IN 2003, THE EMBASSY SENT TWO PARTICIPANTS TO INTERNATIONAL VISITORS PROGRAMS ON "MULTICULTURALISM" AND "WOMEN IN BUSINESS" AND HELD AN E-COMMERCE WORKSHOP FOR LOCAL BUSINESSWOMEN. AROUND 60 PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS PROMOTED HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENERAL BY WORKING

NATION-WIDE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND MICRO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WITH MARGINALIZED GROUPS.

THE EMBASSY LOBBIED THE GOVERNMENT TO PAY GREATER ATTENTION
TO HIV/AIDS. USAID PROVIDED 425,218 USD TO FUND VARIOUS
ACTIVITIES IN COUNTRY TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL
NGOS TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION TOWARD PERSONS INFECTED WITH
HIV/AIDS, TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (VOLUNTARY
COUNSELING AND TESTING TRAINING, SURVEILLANCE METHODS), AND
TO PROMOTE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING. THE EMBASSY

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PUBLIC
AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS BY FOUR LOCAL NGOS AND TO CO-SPONSOR
NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON HIV/AIDS, A PREREQUISITE FOR THE
COMPLETION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN TO COMBAT
HIV/AIDS. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE EMBASSY AND OTHER
STAKEHOLDERS, THE NATIONAL HIV/AIDS PROGRAM COMPLETED THE
NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN, WHICH SURINAME CAN USE TO
STRENGTHEN ITS CASE TO OBTAIN FUNDS FROM THE GLOBAL FUND.
PEACE CORPS CONTRIBUTED TO THESE EFFORTS BY ASSIGNING AT
LEAST TEN VOLUNTEERS TO WORK PRIMARILY ON HIV/AIDS RELATED
PROJECTS. IN ADDITION TO THESE EFFORTS, THE AMBASSADOR MET
WITH SEVERAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRIVATELY TO RELAY HER
CONCERNS ABOUT HIV/AIDS AND PENNED AN OP-ED ON THE NEED TO
INCREASE EFFORTS AGAINST HIV/AIDS, WHICH RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE
COVERAGE IN LOCAL DAILIES.

THE EMBASSY ENCOURAGED THE GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS HUMAN
TRAFFICKING -- SURINAME WAS INITIALLY DEEMED A "TIER 3" AND
LATER A "TIER 2" COUNTRY ON THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 2002 LIST. AS A RESULT OF THIS
PRESSURE, THE GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED AN ANTI-TRAFFICKING
COMMISSION COMPRISED OF VARIOUS MINISTRIES AND A LOCAL NGO
HEADED BY THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND POLICE TO STUDY
TRAFFICKING. IN ADDITION, THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE
AND THE POLICE ESTABLISHED A REGISTRY OF ALL BROTHELS AND
THEIR EMPLOYEES BY NATIONALITY. THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S
OFFICE, IN COOPERATION WITH POLICE OFFICIALS, ALSO EXTENDED
SERVICES PROVIDED TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO
POSSIBLE TRAFFICKED VICTIMS AND IN MAY ESTABLISHED A
"SPECIAL VICTIMS' UNIT" AND A TELEPHONE HOTLINE TO HANDLE
ALL CASES FROM THE COMMERCIAL SEX INDUSTRY. THE MISSION
SECURED 92,000 USD FOR A TWO-YEAR PROGRAM TO BE CARRIED OUT
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE FOR PROSECUTORIAL
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TRAINING TO ASSIST SURINAME IN ITS
FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

END TEXT.

BARNES

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